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BELIEFS REGARDING THE SOUL AND THE FUTURE WORLD AMONG THE GALICIAN UKRAINIANS

775 The departed soul, it is believed by the Ukrainian peasant, does not enter the other world immediately, except in the case of baptized children. It accompanies its body to the place of burial,[1] and returns home with its relatives.[2] When the mourners leave the cemetery, therefore, they are careful to follow the same route as on the outgoing journey, so as not to cause the soul any inconvenience; otherwise it might lose its way, and wander around before finding its way home.[3] Moreover, when the rela-

113 [1] Onyščuk, A. "Materyały do huculskoi demonologii," *Materyały do Ukrainskoi Etnologii*, xi (Lviw, 1909), 48.

[2] Szuchiewicz, W., *Huculszczyzna*, (Lwów, 1902-08, 4 vols.) ii, 275.

[3] *Ibid.*, ii, 275.

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775 tives and guests sit down to their post-funeral dinner—a meal nearly as elaborate as that at a christening or a wedding [4]—a candle, preferably one used at the funeral, is lit and put on the oven, and beside it are placed a glass of brandy and a morsel of bread, in the conviction that the soul will thus participate in the meal.[5] The mountaineers, for a similar reason, usually scatter a little flour on the table and window sill. In the morning they even prove that the soul has touched the flour by pointing to traces which have unquestionably been left by cockroaches and flies.[6] For several days, bread and brandy or water are offered anew each day.[7] In some localities the relatives visit the grave on the third day after the funeral, and place upon it little loaves of bread, cheese, milk, flour, dried prunes, or other foods. After the priest, who is present on such occasions, has finished his prayer, the food is distributed among the poor.[8] On a Sunday a few weeks later, if possible on Easter Sunday, the visit to the grave and the food offering are repeated.[9] These sacrifices to the dead, called *mesoczky* or *perepiczky*, can be explained in two possible ways; either as gifts of food for actual consumption by the dead, or—as is more likely—as attempts to propitiate the ghost, especially a vampire, and thus escape its evil influences.[10] The people are totally unaware of the meaning of the practice. When asked for an explanation, they reply: "*Tak si hodyt*" (this is as it should be).

Before departing for the other world, the soul roams about on earth for forty days, during which time it makes nightly visits to its former home.[11] According to some, it must spend seven years on earth and revisit all the places where during its lifetime

113 [4] Kolberg, O., *Pokucie*, (Kraków, 1882-89, 4 vols.), i, 219.

[5] *Ibid.*, i, 219.

[6] Szuchiewicz, *op. cit.*, ii, 275.

[7] Kaindl, R. F. "Die Seele und ihr Aufenthaltsort nach dem Tode in dem Volksglauben der Rutenen und Huzulen," *Globus*, lxvii (Braunschweig, 1895), 358.

[8] Szuchiewicz, *op. cit.*, ii, 277.

[9] Kaindl, R. F., *Die Huzulen* (Wien, 1894), p. 129.

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 127 n.

[11] Kaindl, in *Globus*, lxvii, 357.

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it did anything good or bad.[12] During its nightly visits to its old home it enters the room quietly, even though the doors and windows be shut, uncovers the children and rocks them, and sometimes plays practical jokes on the members of the family.[13] It retains the power to harm, however, only for one year after the funeral, and the members of the family consequently fear it most during this period.[14] Especially must it be guarded against on the night following the funeral. On this night the members of the household of the deceased must not go to sleep, but must continue their vigil as in the two preceding nights. Although some of the participants in the post-funeral dinner leave after a few hours, others remain in the house to keep the mourners company. In order to keep awake, the watchers resort to various tricks to evoke laughter and ban sleep. As soon as one dozes off, for example, another smears soot on his face, fastens a rag to his coat, or sews his coat to that of another, and the ensuing laughter causes the napping one to awake.[15]

The other world, it is believed, is very distant, and the journey thither takes many days. The mountaineers believe that the soul travels on horseback,[16] and that the road is beset with obstacles and strewn with thorns. To reach the other world the soul must also cross a fathomless sea. If it is deserving, the Mother of God carries it over the water in a tightly woven net.[17]

The peasant conceives the future world in terms of the one he lives in. In heaven, people continue their daily existence much as they did on earth. They lead, to be sure, a life "where neither the burning sun, nor wind and storm disturb the perfect tranquility." But they occupy houses exactly like those found in the native villages, and they eat food which differs in no way from the regular peasant diet. Shepherds busy themselves tending cattle upon rich pastures, and tillers of the soil do their

[12] Onyščuk, *op. cit.*, xi, 48.

[13] Kolessa, J., "Narodziny i chrzciny, wesele i pogrzeb u ludu ruskiego," *Zbiór Wiadomości do Antropologii Krajowej*, xiii, (Kraków, 1889), 150.

[14] *Ibid.*, xiii, 150.

[15] Kolberg, *op. cit.*, i, 219.

[16] Kandi, in *Globus*, lxvii, 358.

[17] Szuchiewicz, *op. cit.*, ii, 274.

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715 work in fertile wheat fields. They differ from people on earth chiefly in that their faces are eternally beaming with happiness.[18]

The other world is divided into paradise (*raj*) and hell (*peklo*) The latter is divided into two parts—a hot and a cold region. The hot hell, where the fire is sevenfold stronger than on earth, is the abode of all sinners save those who failed to observe the fast days. These go to the cold hell, where a continuous frost prevails such as is experienced on earth only during the severest winters. Paradise is above the clouds, in heaven. Hell, on the other hand, is situated in the centre of the earth, and the road to it leads through impassable swamps and marshes. The throne of God, before which all souls must appear for judgment, is the point of departure for both paradise and hell. Thence lead two ladders, one up and the other down. By the former, the souls of the righteous climb to the abode of everlasting bliss; by the latter, those of the damned descend to the land of eternal torture.

Paradise is an immense, sunny meadow, the entrance to which leads through a door in the clouds. There the cottages of the souls are found, but all are occupied, so that a newcomer must usually wait three days in the judgment hall until God arranges a suitable place for him.[19] Hell, on the other hand, is enveloped in impenetrable darkness. There Satan rakes the eternal fire of sulphur and pitch in which sinners are tormented. The infernal punishments have naturally been influenced greatly by Christian visualization of retribution in the other world, especially by the gruesome scenes displayed even now in pictures in some of the older village churches.[20] To describe them would be superfluous. The peasant harbors, however, some independent and original ideas regarding future punishment which are worth considering, especially since they give an insight into his conception of what acts are sinful and what means of punishment are appropriate.

The principle underlying the peasant's conception of reward and punishment is "like should be paid with like." Thus, miserly people, especially those who have been too stingy to

[18] Kaindl, in *Globus*, lxvii, 358.

[19] *Ibid.*, lxvii, 359-60. [20] *Ibid.*, lxvii, 361.

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775 present sound cattle to their godchildren, are punished by having only miserable herds in the other world, despite the rich pasture land given to them, while the generous enjoy beautiful cattle, although their meadows are poor. An inconsiderate person, one who would not help another even with a drink of water, is punished by having to lean over a well, fill a glass with water, spill it and refill it again, perpetually repeating this never-ending task. The selfish rich man or "baron," who, while alive, refused to share his spacious home with the poor or to offer them food when they knocked at his door, must ever run to and fro in an empty dismal palace, knocking his head against the wall each time he approaches it, as if trying to break through the walls in order to escape into the free, sunny world where one can enjoy human companionship. The unscrupulous village judge, who used to spend his time in the tavern drinking, is compelled in the future world to drink incessantly the tears of the innocent whom he convicted. Strife over inherited property is punished by turning the heirs into dogs who eternally tug at a corpse from opposite directions. A woman who has committed infanticide must cook the flesh of her child and eat it, repeating the process endlessly, since every Saturday the child is made whole again. A murderer, finally, forever tries to grasp the soul of his victim, who, in the form of a bird, flies in and out of the holes of a tree trunk (the wounds and body of the murdered person), but eternally fails in his endeavour.[21]

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775 The earth, according to peasant belief, literally teems with spirits of all sorts. Aside from Satan and his demons, however, these are mainly the ghosts of unclean persons more or less recently deceased. Some are exceedingly malevolent and harmful; others are less so, but none are beneficial to man.

Among the most dangerous of supernatural beings are the vampires, the ghosts of deceased witches and wizards. Destructive even in life, they have been released by death from all earthly restraints, and their evil nature, now given full freedom, makes them the most feared element in the imaginary environment. Vampires are of both sexes; males are called *opyry* and females *widmy*. Their corpses are revived at night by the action of the moonbeams, for which reason they are most active during the full moon. Leaving their graves, they first turn their steps to their former homes, to visit their families. An *opyr* who is survived by a widow is said to have intercourse with her. He may even beget offspring in this way, but they are born without bones. A *widma*, on the other hand, is innately modest, and is satisfied to turn loving eyes upon her husband or sweetheart. After visiting their homes, the vampires wander about the houses in the vicinity, rattling the doors and windows and even calling the occupants by name. Sometimes they enter a house by crawling under the door. Once inside, they fasten themselves on the chest of a sleeper and suck his warm blood, before hurrying back to their graves. Vampires usually wander for nine consecutive nights. Besides the harm they do to individuals, they send pestilences upon the village and cause excesses in natural phenomena.[16]

Much less harmful, as well as more restricted in their sphere of activities, are the ghosts of ordinary sinners

113 [16] Wagilewicz, J. "O upiorach i wiedźmach", *Časopis českoho museum* (Quoted by O. Kolgerg, *Pokucie*, III, 209, 211).

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775 (*pokutnyky*) and those of persons who have died a violent death. They occupy themselves mainly with praying to God on moonlit nights in front of the church, and with frightening people.[17] Some of them, however, are definitely malignant, especially the ghosts of drowned persons (*topelnyky*). Such ghosts are doomed to roam the earth for seven years. They live in the water, usually near the spot where they met their death, and, like the vampires, are especially active at the full moon.[18] The appearance ascribed to them differs with the locality. Some picture the *topelnyk* as a little man with long hair which reaches to the ground and covers him completely; others describe him as completely covered with fish-like scales.[19] The *topelnyky* are dangerous only to persons on the water, especially to those rowing in a boat. Since their redemption depends upon their success in drowning another person, they are always on the lookout for a victim.[20] In some places no peasant dares to go rowing on a Sunday or holiday, except to attend church or to call a priest or a doctor, under which circumstances the *topelnyky* have no power to harm.[21]

776 The waters also harbour *rusalky*, or nymphs, the ghosts of girls who have died before marriage. Their bodies are half human and half fish-like. They are not, as a rule, harmful, but spend their time singing, praying and telling stories.[22] It is interesting to note that neither the *rusalky* nor the *topelnyky* are really water spirits, i.e. nature spirits, but rather human ghosts who inhabit the waters. This again emphasizes the fact that true nature spirits are almost completely lacking among the Ukrainians. Moreover, the *rusalky* frequently take up their abode in forest glades and

113 [17] Hnatiuk, V., "Znadoby do halicko-ruskoï demonologii," *Etnograficznyj Zbirnik* (Lviw, 1904), XV, 145.

[18] *Ibid*, XV, 154. [19] Kolberg, *Przemyskie*, p. 233.

[20] Szuchiewicz, W., *Huculszczyzna* (Lwów, 4 vols., 1902-8), IV, 283.

[21] Kolberg, *Przemyskie*, p. 233. [22] Szuchiewicz, *op. cit.*, IV, 282.

775 springs, and thus also become spirits of the woods and fields.[23]

Closely related to the water nymphs, but more harmful, are the so-called *mawky*, the ghosts of children who died before baptism. They are pictured as girls with tall, graceful figures, round faces and long tresses. They wear garlands of flowers upon their heads and are clothed in very thin, transparent dresses, but their backs entirely lack any covering of flesh, so that their entrails are externally visible.[24] They roam the world begging to be baptized, and are especially active on the Eve of St. John (Kupalo), on which night they entice people and suck their blood. A person misled by them never returns to his people, and after his death his soul is appropriated by the devil.[25]

776 Of a more definitely daimonic and malicious nature than the aforementioned spirits are the *diwe-baby*, *bohinky*, or, as they are usually called among the mountaineers, the *mamuny*. They are superhuman women, malevolent, full of passionate desire to associate with people, but with cold, unfeeling hearts. In appearance they are tall, lean, and pale-faced, and have long disorderly hair and breasts thrown over their shoulders.[26] The *diwe-baby* live in deep unapproachable caves, which they leave at night on mischief bent. Those of them who have children steal into houses where there are unbaptized infants, snatch them away and leave their own "miserable-looking, swollen, cross-eyed bastards" in their stead. Such foundlings cannot be taught to speak or walk; they howl like inhuman fiends, crawl upon their hands and grow very rapidly. In order to get rid of such a child and to get back her own, a mother must take the foundling, put him on the dung-pile, and beat him with a broom or stick until the *baba*, filled with pity for her child, is finally forced to take it back and to return the stolen

[23] Zelenin, *op. cit.*, p. 392.

[24] Kolberg, *Pokucie*, III, 99.

[25] Szuchiewicz, *op. cit.*, IV, 281.

[26] Kolberg, *Pokucie*, III, 100.

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infant.[27] The mountaineers, moreover, hold these spirits, some of whom are males, responsible for adultery.[28] The mountaineers likewise believe in a class of supernatural beings, called *czynatary*, who cause quarrels among people. These spirits throw an ant hill full of ants into a burning oven, and just as the ants have no way of escape, so the members of the stricken household cannot help quarreling amongst themselves, and may even go as far as to commit murder.[29]

The so-called *letawica*, or evil spirit of a falling star, is unquestionably the ghost of a wicked being. When it descends to earth it takes on human form of very enticing appearance. It may appear, the people hold, either in male or, less often, in female form, but it is always characterized by youth, beauty, and a slender figure. The *letawica* appears to boys and girls, especially to the latter, in lonely places, when the first promptings of love have been aroused in them. Allured by its display of passion, a girl falls readily into its arms, whereupon it begins sucking the sweetness of youth from her mouth. So passionate is its embrace that the victim gradually loses her freshness, withers, fades and finally dies in its arms.[30]

According to a widespread popular belief, certain objects or manifestations of nature are fetishes, i.e. they serve as dwellings for evil spirits, and, consequently, must be avoided with great care. One such object is the elder (*byżyna*). One must not dig around it, above all not remove any of its roots, for in them dwells an evil spirit who will cause the hand of any one who disregards the taboo to wither or even bring death to him or to a member of his family.[31] Objects of unusual shape, in particular, are believed to harbour evil

[27] *Ibid.*, III, 100-1.

[28] Szuchiewicz, *op. cit.*, IV, 282. [29] *Ibid.*, IV, 286.

[30] Wagilewicz, *op. cit.* (Quoted by O. Kolberg, *Pokucie*, III, 103.)

[31] Kolberg, *Przemyskie*, p. 235.

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775 spirits. A gnarled and crooked tree, for example, should
778 never be felled, lest the anger of its indwelling spirit be aroused. Stones shaped like an egg should not be moved for a similar reason. Crossroads are to be avoided as much as possible, for "the evil spirits, upon being driven out of paradise, have settled there, continuing their malicious activities and causing people all manner of ills".[32] Even natural phenomena may be infested with malevolent spirits. When a whirlwind sucks up a column of dust, the people say that a devil's wedding is taking place. On seeing a twister one must immediately sit down on the ground and recite a formula, especially designed for the occasion; otherwise the whirling dust may get under one's feet and cause them to be crippled.[33]

776 The beings who constitute the spirit environment of the Ukrainian peasant are predominately malevolent. Though a few of them, like the *letawica* and the *topelnyk*, are restricted to a specialized activity, the great majority are capable of causing all kinds of human misery, besides the power they wield over natural forces. They consume the milk from the cows, send sleep upon a man when he is supposed to be keeping watch, uproot trees, roll rocks down from the mountains, send lightning and thunder, cause the death of sheep, and account for the failure of crops. They also cause physical and mental abnormalities, criminal tendencies, and excessive human desires and passions. Deformed children, idiots and imbeciles are the work of vampires and the *diwe-baby*; and murder, quarrels, adultery and sexual irregularities are incited by other malignant ghosts.

[32] Kaindl, *op. cit.*, p. 83. [33] Kolberg, *Pokucie*, III, 91